

Patient Chemo Education

**A NEW DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER CAN PRESENT MANY
CHALLENGES FOR A PATIENT AND THEIR FAMILY**

The Cancer Clinic at Halton Healthcare's
Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is
here to guide you through this.



Chemotherapy

PREPARING FOR YOUR TREATMENT

The Cancer Care Clinic

- The Cancer Care Clinic is an umbrella term for outpatient cancer treatment clinics.
 - The clinic is on the 2nd floor in the north building by the walkway to the parking garage.
- The clinic shares space with Medical Day Care.
 - The clinic is open from 8am to 4pm Monday to Friday and closed for public holidays.

The Different Clinics in the Cancer Care Clinic are:
Chemotherapy Suite | Consultation Clinic | Radiation Clinic

Cancer Care Clinic Treatment Options

- Cancer Treatments
 - Surgery
 - Radiation Therapy
 - Systemic Therapy
 - No treatment (active surveillance)
- Chemotherapy
 - Targeted Therapy (drugs that work on specific cancer cells)
 - Hormonal Therapy
 - A combination of any of the above

Important Things to Know About

- Your Care Team – who is who
- Your Cancer Treatment
- Safety Precautions
- Possible Side Effects
- Managing any Side Effects
- Supportive Care
- Local Resources



What is a Care Team?

All of the team members in the cancer clinic work together to provide the safest and best care possible.

THE TEAM INCLUDES:

- Clerical Staff
 - Dietitians
 - Chemo Suite Nurses
 - who work in the treatment area
 - Primary Clinic Nurses
 - who work in the consultation clinic
- Doctors, called Oncologists
 - Hematologists, Medical Oncologists and Radiation Oncologists
 - Pharmacy team
 - Volunteers
 - Spiritual Care
 - Social Worker

Chemotherapy

- Chemotherapy is medication that treats the cancer
- Chemotherapy interferes with cancer cell growth
- It is used to cure cancer, slow down the growth of cancer, prevent the spread of cancer or for symptom relief
- Chemotherapy can be given in lots of different ways, IV into the vein, in a tablet (pill) form, or in an injection
- Not everyone gets the same chemotherapy, each treatment plan is made specifically for you



What is a treatment plan?

Your treatment plan is made by your doctor, specific for your cancer and goals of care. It includes:

- Treatment drugs such as chemotherapy or targeted therapy for example, other medications required to treat any expected side effects
- Number and frequency of treatments, which is individual to each person
- How the drugs are to be given or taken
- Additional care or treatments, examples would be a central line or Home Care referral

How is Chemotherapy Given

Chemotherapy is given many ways

- Orally, which means by mouth (tablet/pill form)
- Into a vein
 - Usually forearm or occasionally hand
 - Through a Central Line:
 - **Port:** a device that is under the skin in the chest area
 - **PICC:** this is like an IV but can be used for a longer period of time
- Into a muscle
- Under the skin (subcutaneously)

Where do I get my treatment?

All patients will register at reception. Volunteers will support you to complete a symptom assessment, also known as an ESAS

TWO AREAS IN THE CLINIC:

Consultation Clinic

- Where you will see doctors (Oncologists), receive education about oral treatments, receive any prescriptions. Certain procedures are also performed in the clinic

Chemotherapy Suite

- Where any treatment or procedure is performed, for example infusions of chemotherapy or blood transfusions

What to bring on your first day

- 1** | Health (OHIP) card
- 2** | Current medications in original containers if possible
- 3** | Name and address of your family doctor
- 4** | A list of any known allergies
- 5** | A list of questions you want to ask your care team
- 6** | A family member or friend
- 7** | Some money or debit/credit cards to pay for parking, purchase food or prescriptions
- 8** | Food/snacks if desired
- 9** | Your personal entertainment materials, books, mobile device, magazines etc.

Preparing for Treatment Day

- Arrive on time
 - Complete your blood work 24-48 hours prior to treatment as directed by your care team.
 - Eat a light breakfast prior to treatment
 - Dress comfortably and in layers as your temperature may fluctuate
 - Do not wear any scented products or perfume
 - Bring all your medication, including those bought over the counter, on the first day of treatment
- Bring any reading or entertainment material, e.g. laptop, mobile device. All treatment chairs have a TV with cable stations.
 - Bring a friend or family member if you desire
 - We do not recommend bringing children into the chemo suite
 - If you are there over the lunchtime, bring a light lunch
 - Bring own headphones if preferred

What are the Safety Precautions?

Safe handling is required for staff and the patient both during and after treatment. Staff will wear personal protection equipment or PPE during the treatment.

Following your treatment, for the first 48 hours, or longer (if directed by your healthcare team) you should:

INTIMACY

- Use condoms for the first 72 hours after chemo
- Use birth control when receiving chemo, it is important not to conceive while on chemo. If you have concerns about fertility the care team will want to discuss this with you

TOILETING

- Always sit down when using the toilet (men and women)
- Flush the toilet twice after use
- Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly
- The care team will provide specific information about how to manage a spill in your home if this were to happen

Side Effects

- Side effects are expected with some cancer treatments
- The care team will know what side effects are expected based on your treatment plan
- You will receive personalized education about the side effects, what to expect during the treatment and what to look out for after the treatment
- Knowing about your treatment helps to:
 - **Improve your quality of life**
 - **Reduce fear**
 - **Keep you safe**
- Your doctor will prescribe any medications that are required to manage the expected side effects

Common Side Effects

Side effects depend on the type of treatment you have and your reaction to it.

Common side effects include but are not experienced by everyone:

- Fatigue
- Fever – due to low blood counts
- Mouth sores and oral thrush
- Nausea and or vomiting
- Diarrhea and or constipation
- Hair loss
- Bladder irritation

Tips for Managing Fatigue

Plan Ahead: Do the things that mean the most to you first. Plan rest periods before activities.

Be Active: Gentle activity can give you more energy.

Rest when you need to: Short naps of 10 or 15 minutes rather than longer naps during the day. Save your longest sleep for the night.

Keep track of your energy levels: during and after treatment in a journal.

Try to schedule appointments: or activities you enjoy when you have the most energy.



Blood Related Side Effects

- One of the most important and common side effects of chemotherapy is its effect on the blood cells
- Blood cells are among the most rapidly dividing cells in the body which is why they are very sensitive to chemotherapy



SIGNS OF LOW RED BLOOD CELL COUNT ANEMIA

- Feeling tired or weak
- Feeling dizzy or light headed
- Short of breath
- Mental confusion
- Pale skin colour

At times a blood transfusion may be required

Blood Related Side Effects Continued

SIGNS OF LOW WHITE BLOOD COUNT

- Fever over 37.8 °C or 100 °F
 - Digital oral thermometer in working order
- Chills or shaking
- Unusual sweating
- Burning feeling when passing urine
- Redness, heat, swelling and drainage from a wound
- Cough with yellow or green coloured sputum
- Sore throat (along with fever)
- Diarrhea (along with fever)

Fever

If you have a fever 38.0° C or 100.4° F

This may be an emergency that requires medical attention
and possibly treatment

**Contact the Clinic to speak to your primary nurse:
905 338 4635**

If fever occurs between the hours of 8:00am - 4:30pm
Monday to Friday, contact the Call Clinic. If fever occurs in
the evening, on a weekend or holiday – go to
the Emergency Department

Have a working thermometer in your home

Preventing Infection

- Frequent hand-washing
 - Avoid people who are ill
 - Clean cuts immediately
 - Moisturize skin
 - Eat well-balanced diet.
WASH all fruits and vegetables.
Avoid raw meat, and raw fish
 - Do not share drinking glasses
or eating utensils
 - Shower or bathe daily, if
you are able
- Do not touch animal droppings,
litter boxes or birdcages. (If you
must clean up after an animal,
use rubber gloves and mask)
 - Do not work in the garden
or with soil unless you are
wearing gloves
 - Check with your oncologist
before dental appointments/
procedures

Low Platelet Count

SIGNS TO WATCH FOR:

- Easy bruising
- Tiny pinpoint red or purple dots on your skin
- Bleeding from gums or nose
- Blood seen in stool or urine

TIPS FOR MANAGING LOW PLATELETS:

- Be careful when using sharp knives, razors and other sharp items
- Use a soft bristle toothbrush
- Check with your doctor before dental check-ups/procedures
- Avoid using blood thinners (aspirin, Ibuprofen(Advil) unless physician/ oncologist is aware.
- Avoid using rectal suppositories and enemas without oncologist approval

Tips for Managing Nausea and Vomiting

- Eat smaller meals and snacks more often throughout the day
 - Nibble on dry foods, such as crackers, toast, dry cereals or bread sticks throughout the day
 - Avoid foods that are very sweet, greasy, fried or spicy, or that have a strong smell
 - Sip water, juices and other non-fizzy liquids throughout the day
- Let other people do the cooking
 - Avoid lying down for at least half an hour after eating unless your upper body is elevated
 - Take prescribed medication for nausea

Contact Your Physician if the vomiting lasts more than 1 day (24 hours)

Tips to Manage Diarrhea

- Drink plenty of non-carbonated, caffeine-free fluids, such as water, juice and clear broth
- Limit greasy, fried, spicy or very sweet foods
- Stay away from natural laxatives, such as prunes, prune juice, and rhubarb
- Choose foods that contain less fiber
- Take prescribed medications for diarrhea

Contact Physician if:

- **Blood in stool**
- **Causes abdominal cramps or pain for more than 24hrs**
- **If diarrhea last for more than 24 hrs**

Tips to Manage Constipation

- Add more fiber to your diet gradually
- Drink plenty of liquids throughout the day. Try water, fruit or vegetable juices, teas and lemonade
- Stay active
- Take prescribed medication for constipation
- Be aware that some medication can cause constipation
- Understand your normal bowel pattern, let your care team know if your pattern changes. If you do not have a normal bowel movement for more than 2 days and this is unusual for you contact your care team

Contact physician if:

- **Blood in stool**
- **Abdominal cramps or pain for 2 or more days**

Tips to Manage Hair Loss

Some chemotherapy drugs, but not all – can cause hair loss or thinning of the hair. Usually starts 2 or 3 weeks after treatment begins.

Hair loss is usually temporary. Your hair may begin to grow back while you're still having treatment or it may take from 3 to 6 months after treatment to start growing back.

TIPS BEFORE TREATMENT

- Get a short haircut or shave your head.
Use an electric shaver
- Choose a head covering that is most comfortable for you e.g. wig, scarf, hat
- Visit a wig specialist – choose a wig before you experience hair loss
- Find out about paying for a wig – if no coverage - script from physician

TIPS DURING TREATMENT

- Use a mild shampoo and a soft hairbrush
- Avoid colouring, perming or straightening your hair during treatment
- Protect your scalp from the sun

Oral Chemotherapy

- Tell your family doctor, Nurse Practitioner, Specialist, dentists or other healthcare providers that you are taking medication for cancer
 - Keep the pills and medications in a safe place, away from children and pets
 - Keep the pills and medications in their original containers.
 - Wash your hands before and after touching the pills
- Do not crush, chew or cut your pills
 - Use the calendar and/or schedule provided to remember when to take your pills and medications
 - If you miss a dose contact the clinic for direction. Do not make up for missed or omitted doses
 - Bring any left over or unused pills and medication back to the pharmacy
 - Talk to your healthcare team if you have a problem paying for, or getting yours pills and medications

Complimentary Therapies

- Therapies that make you feel better
 - Therapies that compliment your treatment
 - Be sure to discuss with your care team any therapies you are considering
- Therapies can include:
 - Relaxation therapy
 - Massage
 - Imagery
 - Reiki & therapeutic touch
 - Art & music therapy
 - Aromatherapy
 - Reflexology



Alternate Therapies

Alternative therapies are therapies that may be outside of what is recommended by the Cancer Clinic.

Talk to your care team before using these therapies, so they don't interfere with your treatment.

Please notify your care team of all alternative medicines you are taking.



Supportive Care

- The Care Team want to address all your needs, not just your physical. This can include your practical needs e.g. financial, social and spiritual needs
- Available are specialists such as a social worker, spiritual care, peer support for example
- Please talk to your care team about any concerns or fears you have, your team will also

assess you regularly to monitor the impact of your cancer diagnosis and treatment on your overall wellbeing and make recommendations to you to maintain your quality of life

- The resource room has a selection of materials for you to take and read as well as access to a large online library of resources especially for people with cancer and their families

Community Support Services

WELLSPRING

- Peer Support
- A full calendar of events and support
- Resources available in the resource room in the clinic

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY

- Many programs and resources
- Transportation Program – discuss with the care team if you need transportation services



Important Things to Remember

CONTACT PHYSICIAN/NURSE
AT 905-338-4635

- Fever – immediately
- Nausea & Vomiting – 1 day (24 hours)
- Diarrhea – 2 days (48 hours)
- Constipation – 3 days (72 hours)
- Contact physician/nurse with questions

COMPLETE BLOOD WORK 24 – 72
HOURS PRIOR TO CHEMOTHERAPY

- Contact the Clinic with symptom concerns
- Not an acute line – 48 hour call back window; go to Emergency with acute symptoms